

CHAPTER 9

SUPPORT OPERATIONS

US military forces conduct support operations to assist foreign and domestic civil authorities or designated groups by providing essential supplies and services in the face of adverse conditions, usually disease, hunger, or the consequences of disasters. Mission success in support operations, which are normally characterized by the lack of an active opponent, is measured in terms of the ability to relieve suffering and to help civil authorities respond to crises. The ultimate goals of these operations are to meet the immediate needs of the supported groups and to transfer responsibility quickly and efficiently to appropriate civilian authorities. Support operations are usually nonlinear and noncontiguous. Support operations may be independent actions. Conversely, they may complement offensive, defensive, or stability operations (before, during, and after execution); refer to the discussions of antiarmor company operations in Chapter 4 (offense) and Chapter 5 (defense). (For a more detailed examination of support operations, refer to FM 3-0 and 3-07.)

Section I. TYPES OF SUPPORT OPERATIONS

There are two types of support operations: domestic support operations (DSOs) and foreign humanitarian assistance (FHA) operations. Both share four forms of operations, which occur to varying degrees in each support operation: relief operations, support to weapons of mass destruction incidents, support to civil law enforcement, and community assistance. Army units conduct DSOs in the US and its territories using active and reserve components. It conducts FHA operations abroad and under the direction of a combatant commander. Since domestic emergencies can require Army forces to respond with multiple capabilities and services, they may conduct the four forms of support operations simultaneously during a given operation.

9-1. DOMESTIC SUPPORT OPERATIONS

DSOs supplement the efforts and resources of state and local governments and NGOs within the United States. During DSOs, the US military always responds in support of another civilian agency. DSOs also include those activities and measures taken by DOD to foster mutual assistance and support between the department of defense (DOD) and any civil government agency. DSOs may include military assistance with planning or preparedness for, or in the application of resources in response to, the consequences of civil emergencies or attacks, including national security emergencies or major disasters. A presidential declaration of an emergency or disaster area usually precedes a DSO.

a. The US military provides domestic support primarily in accordance with a DOD directive for military assistance to civil authorities. The directive addresses responses to both natural and manmade disasters and includes military assistance with civil disturbances, counterdrug activities, counterterrorism activities, and law enforcement.

b. DSOs focus on the condition of all types of natural and manmade properties, with the goal of helping to protect and restore these properties as requested. Typically,

environmental operations are conducted in response to such events as forest and grassland fires, hazardous material releases, floods, and earthquakes.

9-2. FOREIGN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.

US forces conduct FHA operations outside the borders of the US or its territories to relieve or reduce the results of natural or manmade disasters or other endemic conditions, such as human suffering, disease, or deprivation, that might present a serious threat to life or that can result in great damage to or loss of property.

(1) The US military typically supplements the host nation authorities in concert with other governmental agencies, NGOs, PVOs, and unaffiliated individuals. Most foreign humanitarian assistance operations closely resemble domestic support operations. The distinction between the two is the legal restrictions applied to US forces inside the US and its territories. The Posse Comitatus Act does not apply to US forces overseas.

(2) FHA operations are limited in scope and duration. They focus exclusively on prompt aid to resolve an immediate crisis. Crises or disasters caused by hostile individuals or factions attacking a government are normally classified as stability rather than support operations. In environments where the situation is vague or hostile, support activities are considered a subset of a larger stability or offensive or defensive operation.

9-3. CATEGORIES OF SUPPORT OPERATIONS.

Support operations may be independent actions, or they may complement offensive, defensive, and stability operations. Most offensive, defensive, and stability operations require some form of support operations before, during, and after execution. Support operations generally fall into four categories:

- Relief operations.
- Support to incidents involving chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosive consequence management (CBRNE-CM).
- Support to civil law enforcement.
- Community assistance.

a. **Relief Operations.** In general, the actions performed during relief operations are identical in both DSO and FHA operations. The actions can be characterized as either humanitarian relief, which focuses on the well being of supported populations, or disaster relief, which focuses on recovery of critical infrastructure after a natural or manmade disaster. Relief operations accomplish one or more of the following objectives:

- Save lives.
- Reduce suffering.
- Recover essential infrastructure.
- Improve quality of life.

(1) **Disaster Relief.** Disaster relief encompasses those actions taken to restore or recreate the minimum infrastructure to allow effective humanitarian relief and set the conditions for longer-term recovery. This includes establishing and maintaining minimum safe working conditions plus the security measures necessary to protect relief workers and the affected population from additional harm.

(2) **Humanitarian Relief.** Humanitarian relief focuses on life-saving measures to alleviate the immediate needs of a population in crisis. It often includes the provision of medical support, food, water, medicines, clothing, blankets, shelter, and heating or

cooking fuel. In some cases it involves transportation support to move affected people from a disaster area.

b. **Support to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-yield Explosive Consequence Management (CBRNE-CM).** CBRNE-CM incidents are deliberate or unintentional events involving chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives that produce catastrophic loss of life or property. Army forces assist civil authorities in protecting US territory, population, and infrastructure prior to an attack by supporting domestic preparedness and critical asset protection programs. If an attack occurs, response to the consequences of the attack may include the following types of support:

- Decontamination and medical care, including assessment.
- Triage treatment.
- MEDEVAC.
- Hospitalization.
- Follow-up on victims of chemical and biological agents.
- Transportation.
- Bomb dogs.
- Imagery.
- Public affairs.

c. **Support to Civil Law Enforcement.** Support to domestic civil law enforcement generally involves support activities related to counterterrorism, counterdrug operations, civil disturbance operations, or general support. Support may involve providing resources, training, or direct support. Federal forces remain under the control of their military chain of command at all times while providing the support.

d. **Community Assistance.** Community assistance is a broad range of activities that provides support and maintains a strong connection between the military and civilian communities. Community assistance activities provide effective means of projecting a positive military image, providing training opportunities, and enhancing the relationship between the Army and the American public. These activities should fulfill community needs that would not otherwise be met. Community activities can enhance individual and unit combat readiness. Projects should exercise individual soldier skills, encourage teamwork, and challenge leaders' planning and coordination skills. They should result in measurable accomplishments and increase soldier proficiency. Commanders of forward-deployed Army units may also apply those concepts when fostering or establishing relationships with host nation communities.

(1) State and local efforts also improve the community's perception of the Army. Community assistance varies widely ranging from individual soldier involvement to full installation participation. An installation or organization can enter into an agreement with the local community to provide critical services not available in the community, to augment community services unable to meet demand, or to ensure that emergency services are available in the shortest possible time.

(2) Participation in public events, memorials, and exhibits facilitates interaction between soldiers and the local community. This contact communicates the professionalism, readiness, and standards of the Army. Individual soldiers serve as representatives and role models to the civilian community, promote and inspire

patriotism, and generate interest in the Army. This increased public awareness enhances the Army's reputation and secures the confidence of the American people.

(3) Laws, regulations, and policies limit Army participation in community assistance activities. Commanders consider the objective and purpose of community assistance and the limitations under which Army participation in community assistance activities is authorized. Commanders ensure that their initiatives do not compete with local resources or services and do not result in remuneration in any form. Commanders also avoid providing assistance and support to one segment of a community when they cannot also provide the same assistance to others. Actions that appear to benefit a particular group can foster perceptions of bias or partisanship. Ideally, support should be provided only to events and activities of common interest and benefit across the community.

Section II. CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUPPORT OPERATIONS

Although each support operation is different, troop-leading procedures used in offensive, defensive, and stability operations still apply. The following considerations supplement those processes and can help commanders develop tailored concepts and schemes for support operations.

9-4. PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SUPPORT TO THE LARGEST NUMBER OF PEOPLE

The principle of essential support to the largest number guides prioritization and allocation. Commanders allocate finite resources to achieve the greatest good.

a. Initial efforts usually focus on restoring vital services, which include food and water distribution, medical aid, power generation, search and rescue, firefighting, and community relations. It may be necessary to complete a lower-priority task before accomplishing a higher one. For example, units may need to restore limited electrical services before restoring hospital emergency rooms and shelter operations.

b. Commanders assess requirements to employ units effectively. They determine how and where to apply limited assets to benefit the most people. In some cases, warfighting reconnaissance capabilities and techniques are adaptable to support operation requirements. For example, mounted patrols using thermal sights can survey relief routes and locate civilian refugee groups. Standard information collection methods are reinforced and supplemented by civil affairs or dedicated disaster assessment teams, as well as interagency, host nation, and NGO sources. The combination of traditional and nontraditional information support allows commanders to obtain a clear understanding of the situation and adjust plans accordingly.

9-5. COORDINATE ACTIONS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

DSOs and FHA operations are typically joint and interagency; FHA operations are also multinational. The potential for duplication of effort and working at cross-purposes is high. Unity of effort requires, as a minimum, common understanding of purposes and direction among all agencies. Ensuring unity of effort and efficient use of resources requires constant coordination. Army forces enhance unity of effort by establishing a civil military operations center (CMOC) in FHA operations and by providing liaison elements, planning support, advisors, and technical experts to lead civil authority in DSOs. Commanders determine where their objectives and plans complement or conflict

with those of other key agencies through these contacts. Each participant's capabilities are in constant demand.

9-6. ESTABLISH MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS

In conjunction with supported agencies and governments, commanders establish relevant measures of effectiveness (MOEs), similar to the tactical METT-TC factors considered during mission analysis, to gauge mission accomplishment. MOEs focus on the condition and activity of those being supported. Because they are discrete and measurable and they link cause and effect, they are helpful in measuring the progress and success of the operation. In famine relief, for example, it may be tempting to measure effectiveness only by the gross amount of food delivered. This may be an acceptable MOE, but a better MOE may be the total nourishment delivered, as measured by the total number of calories delivered per person per day or the rate of decline of deaths directly attributable to starvation. MOEs depend on the situation and require readjustment as situations and guidance change.

9-7. HAND OVER TO CIVILIAN AGENCIES AS SOON AS FEASIBLE

The timing and feasibility of the handover from military to civilian authorities depends on mission-specific considerations. The two most important of these are the ability of civil authorities to resume operations without Army assistance and the necessity of committing Army forces to competing operations. Commanders identify and include civil considerations as early as possible in the planning process. Commanders must continually consider the long-term goals of the civil leadership and the communities they assist. While the immediate goal of support operations is to relieve hardship and suffering, the ultimate goal is to create those conditions necessary for civil follow-on operations. The successful handover of all activities to civil authorities and withdrawal of Army units is a positive signal to the supported population and the Army. It indicates that the community has recovered enough for civil agencies to resume control, that life is beginning to return to normal, and that the Army unit has successfully completed its support mission.

9-8. TRANSITION TO COMBAT

In some support operations (typically those that take place in an active combat theater), the company commander must remain prepared to defend himself or to attack forces that threaten his command. This applies differently in each operation. It may mean maintaining a reserve within the company. It may even compel the company to dispose its forces in ways that allow immediate transition from support operations to combat.

Section III. PHASES OF SUPPORT OPERATIONS

Although each operation is unique, support operations are generally conducted in three broad phases: response, recovery, and restoration. Army elements can expect to be most heavily committed during the response phase. They are progressively less involved during the recovery phase, with only very limited activity, if any, during the restoration phase.

9-9. RESPONSE PHASE

In the response phase, commanders focus on the life-sustaining functions that are required by those in the disaster area. The following functions dominate these response operations:

- Search and rescue.
- Emergency flood control.
- Hazard identification.
- Food distribution.
- Water production, purification, and distribution.
- Temporary shelter construction and administration.
- Transportation support.
- Fire fighting.
- Medical support.
- Power generation.
- Communications support.

9-10. RECOVERY PHASE

Recovery phase operations begin the process of returning the community infrastructure and related services to a status that meets the immediate needs of the population. Typical recovery operations include the following:

- Continuation of response operations as needed.
- Damage assessment.
- Power distribution.
- Water and sanitation services.
- Debris removal.

9-11. RESTORATION PHASE

Restoration is a long-term process that returns the community to pre-disaster normality. Restoration activities do not generally involve large numbers of military forces. When they are involved, Army elements generally work with affected communities in the transfer of responsibility to other agencies as military support forces redeploy.